

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: OAS, PGOV, PBOR, CI, BL, PE
SUBJ: PRESIDENT'S OAS SPEECH -- CHILEANS TAKE EXCESSIVE UMBRAGE

1. SUMMARY: PRIVATELY TO THE AMBASSADOR AND PUBLICLY IN THE PRESS CHILEANS HAVE REACTED IMMEDIATELY AND SHARPLY TO THE PRESIDENT'S REFERENCE IN HIS OAS SPEECH OF JUNE 22 TO THE BOLIVIAN OUTLET PROBLEM. THE REACTION IS BASED IN PART ON INCOMPLETE OR INACCURATE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT THE PRESIDENT ACTUALLY SAID AND WILL DIMINISH ACCORDINGLY. THERE IS, HOWEVER, AN ELEMENT OF SERIOUS CHILEAN DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE AMBASSADOR SAW BOTH PRESIDENT PINOCHET AND ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER VALDES ON SEPARATE OCCASIONS JUNE 22, AND FOR REASONS UNRELATED TO THE PRESIDENT'S OAS SPEECH. BOTH IMMEDIATELY EXPRESSED UNHAPPINESS WITH THE PRESIDENT'S REPORTED REMARKS ON THE BOLIVIAN OUTLET PROBLEM. NEITHER HAD, OF COURSE, READ THE FULL TEXT. VALDES SENT AN OFFI-
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CIAL TO THE EMBASSY TO PICK-UP A COPY OF THE SPEECH. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR SAW HIM AGAIN THE EVENING OF JUNE 22, HE WAS MORE RELAXED. NEITHER VALDES NOR PINOCHET DISCUSSED IN DETAIL THEIR SUPPOSED PROBLEMS WITH WHAT THE PRESIDENT HAD SAID.

3. "EL MERCURIO" AND "LA TERCERA" DEVOTE THEIR LEAD EDI-

TORIALS JUNE 23 TO THE PRESIDENT'S OAS SPEECH AND PARTICULARLY HIS STATEMENTS ON THE BOLIVIAN OUTLET. "EL MERCURIO'S" FRONT-PAGED NEWSSTORY ON THE SPEECH IS HEADLINES: "BANZER THANKS CARTER FOR STATEMENT." BOTH THE "MERCURIO" AND "LA TERCERA" EDITORIALS HAVE TWO PRINCIPAL COMPLAINTS. FIRST, THAT THE BOLIVIAN OUTLET PROBLEM IS IN NO SENSE A DISPUTE ON THE ORDER OF THE HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR BORDER PROBLEM OR THE FUTURE OF BELIZE. "LA TERCERA" REMINDS ITS READERS THAT CHILE AND BOLIVIA DO NOT HAVE A SINGLE BORDER DISAGREEMENT PENDING, THAT ALL SUCH QUESTIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WERE RESOLVED BY THE TREATY OF 1904. SECOND, THEY OBJECT TO THE IMPLICATION THAT AN EVENTUAL REVISION OF EXISTING TREATIES, THAT MIGHT PROVIDE BOLIVIA AN OUTLET, SHOULD BE THE SUBJECT OF INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION OR PRESSURE. IN THIS REGARD BOTH NEWSPAPERS IGNORE ENTIRELY THE PRESIDENT'S WORDS THAT "THE DIFFICULT DECISIONS IN THEIR REGIONS CAN ONLY BE MADE BY BOLIVIA, CHILE AND PERU." MORE QUERULOUSLY "LA TERCERA" SAYS THAT THE PRESIDENT IS MISTAKEN TO SUGGEST (PRESUMABLY BY HAVING LISTED IT FIRST) THAT THE BOLIVIAN OUTLET PROBLEM IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ON THE HEMISPHERE'S AGENDA, AND IT NOTES THAT THE PRESIDENT MADE NO REFERENCE TO THE BEAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE WITH ARGENTINA.

4. COMMENT: THE CHILEANS ARE MORE THAN USUALLY SENSITIVE THESE DAYS TO ANY STATEMENTS OR ACTIONS THAT MIGHT CONCEIVELIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ABLY BE DESIGNED TO HELP ITS OPPONENTS AND HARM THE GOC. THE IMMEDIATE REACTION IN THIS CASE WILL BE DILUTED BY MORE CAREFUL READING OF WHAT THE PRESIDENT ACTUALLY SAID. MORE BASICALLY, CHILE HAS NEVER PERCEIVED, MUCH LESS ADMITTED, THAT THE BOLIVIAN OUTLET PROBLEM IS ONE WHICH IT HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP SOLVE. THE 1975 CORRIDOR OFFER, WHILE BY NO MEANS ALTRUISTIC, WAS AND IS VIEWED BY THE CHILEANS AS A SOVEREIGN AND VOLUNTARY INITIATIVE -- AS WOULD HAVE TO BE ANY EVENTUAL REARRANGEMENT OF BORDERS. IT IS NOT A MATTER THAT MIGHT EVENTUALLY GO TO THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OR SOME OTHER MEDIATING BODY. IN THIS RESPECT, THE BOLIVIA OUTLET PROBLEM IS VERY CLOSELY ANALOGOUS TO THE PANAMA CANAL ISSUE -- A POINT THAT SO FAR THE CHILEANS HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO NOTE.

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